

# Heavenly Communication

*How often do you talk with God throughout the day?*

The story is told of a man who traveled to a certain city one cold morning. As he arrived at his hotel, he noticed that the clerks, the guest – everyone – was barefoot. In the coffee shop, he noticed a fellow at a nearby table and asked, “Why aren’t you wearing shoes? Don’t you know about shoes?”

“Of course I know about shoes,” the patron replied.

“Then why don’t you wear them?” the visitor asked.

“Ah, that is the question,” the patron returned. “Why don’t I wear shoes?”

After breakfast, the visitor walked out of the hotel and into the snow. Again, every person he saw was barefoot. Curious, he asked a passerby, “Why doesn’t anyone here wear shoes? Don’t you know that they protect the feet from the cold?”

The passerby said, “We know about shoes. See that building? It’s a shoe factory. We are so proud of the plant that we gather there every week to hear the man in charge tell us how wonderful shoes are.”

“Then why don’t you wear shoes?” the visitor persisted.

“Ah, that is the question,” the passerby replied. “Why don’t we wear shoes?”

When it comes to prayer, many Christians are like the people in that city. They know about prayer, they believe in its power, they frequently hear sermons on the subject, but it is not a vital part of their lives.

As we consider prayer, let me answer six vital questions:

## **What is prayer?**

Simply put, prayer is communicating with God. As a child of God, you are invited to come boldly before His throne. “Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, ...” the author writes, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16, New International Version).

We can come to God with a reverent, joyful heart, knowing that He loves us more than anyone else has ever loved us or will ever love us. Real prayer is expressing our devotion to our heavenly Father, invited Him to talk to us as we talk to Him.

### **Who can pray?**

Anyone can pray, but only those who walk in faith and obedience to Christ can expect to receive answers to their prayers. Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6, NIV). Praying with a clean heart is also vital to successful prayer. The Psalmist says, “If I had cherished sin in my heart the Lord would not have listened” (Psalm 66:18, NIV).

One of the most frequent hindrances to prayer is an unforgiving spirit. Jesus says, “When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25, NIV).

In addition, we must have a believing heart if we expect God to answer our prayers. Jesus says, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21:22, NIV). Yet few of us take these words seriously, and few dare to claim what God has so generously promised us.

### **Why are we to pray?**

God commands us to pray. The New Testament commands to pray are many. Here are a few: Watch and pray (Luke 21:36; Mark 14:38). Pray with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2). Pray in the Spirit (I Corinthians 14:15). Always pray and do not give up (Luke 18:1).

We also pray to have fellowship with God. Prayer is not just an “escape hatch” for us to get out of trouble, please ourselves or gain our selfish ends. It is our “hotline” of communication and fellowship with God. In the process, we receive spiritual nurture and strength to live a victorious life, and we maintain the boldness necessary for a vital witness for Christ.

### **To whom do we pray?**

We pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When we pray to the Father, our prayers are accepted by Jesus Christ and interpreted to God the Father by the Holy Spirit. But because God is one God, manifested in three persons, and since there is no jealousy between the three persons of the Trinity, it is perfectly acceptable to pray to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit.

As we pray, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding on our behalf. Paul records in Romans 8:34, “Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (NIV). Earlier in that chapter, Paul wrote, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness....And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (vv.26, 27)

### **When should we pray?**

God’s Word commands us to “Pray continually” (I Thessalonians 5:17, NIV).

The famous evangelist Charles Spurgeon said, “Prayer pulls the rope down below, and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell, for they pray so languidly; others give only an occasional jerk at the rope. But he who communicates with heaven is the man who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously with all his might.”

It is not always necessary to be on our knees, or even in a quiet room to pray. God wants us to be in touch with Him constantly, wherever we are. We can pray in the car, while washing the dishes or while walking down the street. The more frequently we share our thoughts and desires with our Lord, the more meaningful our fellowship and the closer we come to Him.

### **What should we include in our prayers?**

Although prayer cannot be reduced to a formula, certain basic elements should be included in your communication with God – adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication (ACTS).

#### **A – Adoration**

To adore God is to worship and praise Him, to honor and exalt Him in our heart and mind and with our lips. Adoration expresses our complete trust in Him and reflects our confidence that He hears us. Adoration demonstrates our reverence, awe, love and gratitude.

#### **C – Confession**

When our prayer begins with adoration, the Holy Spirit has opportunity to reveal any sin in our life that needs to be confessed. By seeing God in His purity, His holiness and His love, we become aware of our sinfulness and unworthiness. Confessing our sin

and receiving His forgiveness restores us to fellowship with Him, and clears the channel for God to hear and answer our prayers.

### **T – Thanksgiving**

Nothing pleases God more than our consistent expression of faith. What better way to do this than to tell Him, “Thank you”? An attitude of thanksgiving enables us to recognize that God controls all things – not just the blessings, but the problems and adversities as well.

### **S – Supplication**

Supplication includes petition for our own needs and intercession for others. We are to pray for everything and in specific terms.

Pray about your problems, pray for wisdom, guidance and strength – pray for everything (Philippians 4:6). Then pray for others – your spouse, children, parents, neighbors and friends. Pray for your pastor and missionaries. Pray especially for the salvation of souls and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Pray for and seek to find one or more Christian friends with whom you can establish prayer partnerships.

These elements – adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication – have helped many Christians to develop a more well-rounded prayer life.

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*Adapted from The Coming Revival by Bill Bright, published by NewLife Publication, Orlando Fla.*

*Bill Bright, founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ, did five years of graduate work at Princeton and Fuller theological seminaries. He has received six honorary degrees, including doctor of laws, doctor of divinity and doctor of letters. He has written more than 50 books and hundreds of articles.*